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*A Conjectural Interpretation of Cuneiform Texts* vol. V,  
81—7—27, 49 and 50.—By ELLEN SETON OGDEN,  
Albany, New York.

The following text appeared in 1898, but no interpretation has yet been given beyond the more or less generally accepted opinions that the fragment is part of one of the so-called "practice-tablets", and that the older characters thereon are somewhat imperfectly executed Babylonian pictographs.<sup>1</sup> Against this hypothesis it may be urged, first, that the archaic signs do not have at all the peculiar *genre* of Babylonian writing nor do they resemble the Babylonian signs of any known period or locality with sufficient closeness to warrant calling them Babylonian; and secondly, that the marked diversity of characters in each case and under each heading still remains unexplained.

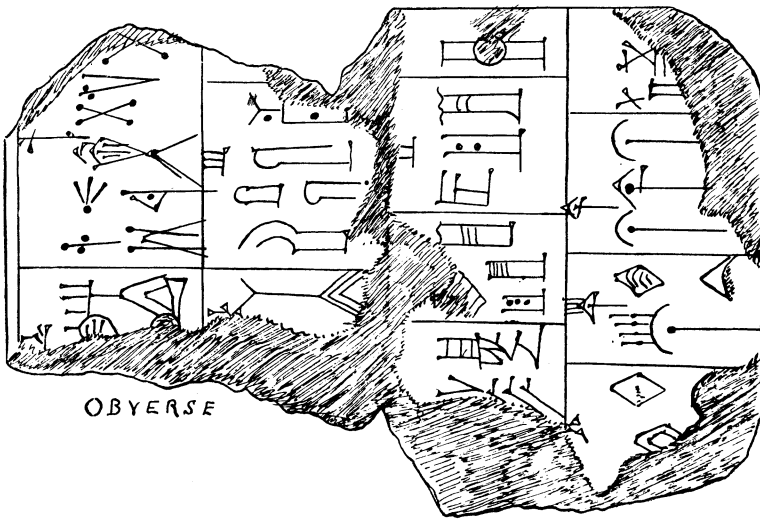
The present paper wishes to suggest that the fragment may be part of an Elamitic-Babylonian syllabary in which the Elamitic equivalents are given under a Babylonian or Neo-Babylonian denominative usually to be found at the left of each case. It will be noted that while the Babylonian signs are fairly homogeneous, the others seem to represent two distinct types of writing. One is partly linear and partly cuneiform but still pictographic; the other is partly cuneiform and apparently the style of a later period. It is with the archaic signs only that this paper is to deal, but the suggestion may be made that the later ones are likewise Elamitic, since the Elamites developed a cuneiform system of their own probably parallel to that of the Mesopotamian Valley.

According to de Morgan, the proto-Elamitic script appears for the first time in Susa during the period of archaic culture which ended about 4000 B. C. (dating Sargon at 3800 B. C.).

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<sup>1</sup> Weber, "*Die Literatur der Babylonier und Assyrier*". p. 293.  
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Of course this must be considerably reduced if the conclusions of more recent writers be accepted in regard to Sargon. Père Scheil places the inscriptions of Karibu of Šušinak in the middle or end of the fourth millenium B. C.<sup>1</sup> It would be too hazardous to assign a date to the archaic forms of the present tablet without more data, but their general appearance would indicate that they are later than the proto-Elamitic of Karibu, and it is of oourse possible that the mixture of linear and cuneiform characters may be accounted for by a revival of archaic writing such as took place in Babylonia.




In working over the interpretation on these unfamiliar signs many suggestions were gleaned from a study of Cretan writing in Mr. Arthur J. Evan's *Scripta Minoa*. Mr. Evans himself has called attention more than once to the close resemblance between certain Cretan and Babylonian pictographs and this was found to be even more strikingly true of the Cretan and Elamitic. Of course it is impossible to claim identity when the resemblance can be accounted for by coincidence or the nature of the object represented, yet there are here definite characteristics in common which at least raise the question of



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<sup>1</sup> De Morgan, *Delegation en Perse*, vol. vi, p. 60, 61. Pumpelly, *Explorations in Turkestan*, vol. I, pp. 50ff.

connection between the Minoan civilization of the Mediterranean basin, and the culture not only of the Mesopotamian Valley but also of the great "Hinterland" of Elam. The direction of the transmission of the culture and the possible part played in it by the Hittite civilization must be left to future investigation. All that the present paper wishes to call attention to in passing are certain resemblances of writing. To facilitate this the Cretan forms are included in the text.

*Case. A.* The case sign is , NU, the original meaning of which seems to have been "to be hostile, to destroy" and as will be shown later its earliest form was the picture of a weapon or implement for cutting. For full assignment of meanings here and under succeeding signs see Meissner's *Ideogramme* and Brunnow's *Classified List*. With regard to the Elamitic characters it must also be remembered that the signs are reversible, pointing towards either right or left.

1. For identifications of forms see as follows. Elamitic, *Liste*<sup>1</sup>, Nos. 408, 416, 417, 501. Babylonian, *Rec.*<sup>2</sup> Nos. 257, 517 bis. The Babylonian ŠU = abatu, to destroy, (Br. 8650) aḥāzu, to seize, (Br. 8651) saḥāpu, (Br. 8737) to overthrow, destroy. The origin of the pictograph is not clear.

2. See for Elamitic *Liste* No. 412; for Babylonian *Rec.* No. 154. An analysis of the Semitic meanings of this sign leads to the conclusion that it is a pictograph representing two crossed arrows, hence the double meanings nakāru, nakru, to be hostile, enemy (Br. 1143—4), and naṣāru, to protect (Br. 1146). Compare also šanu (M. 654), šunnu (Br. 1148), to change, alter. In support of this origin may be quoted the crossed arrows of the Egyptian  NEIT, to indicate hostility(?)<sup>3</sup>, and possibly the Cretan sign  although Evans<sup>4</sup> at present ascribes to it a different origin and meaning.

3. This sign is obviously late and has no exact counterpart. The nearest to it is perhaps the Neo-Babylonian form

<sup>1</sup> For Elamitic characters when cited under this heading see De Morgan's *Delegation en Perse*, Paris, 1901—1905, Vol. VI.

<sup>2</sup> For Babylonian characters when cited under this heading see Thureau-Dangin's *Recherches sur l'Origine de l'Écriture cuneiforme*, Paris, 1898.


<sup>3</sup> Evans, *Scripta Minoa*, p. 114.


<sup>4</sup> Evans, *op. cit.* List, 112 a.

quoted, which is the usual sign for *šalmu*, statue, image. The customary reading for this in Sumerian is *ALAM*, but it is worth noting that *šalmu* is given as one of the Semitic meanings for *NU*, (Br. 1963) and that this association with *NU* may account for its presence under this case sign. Possible the form here found is a late Elamitic equivalent of the Neo-Babylonian.

4. This sign is clearly a compound, of which the first part apparently serves as a determinative.

a) This determinative suggests grain or a growing plant and finds a parallel in the Elamitic sign *Liste* 75 or in one of the groups 557—61 and 116—7, all of which are plant signs. For the Babylonian compare *Rec.* 140, where *ŠE* =

plant or grain or wood; the Cretan  (List 92, l, d)<sup>1</sup>,

unmistakably a plant sign, and the Egyptian  a clump of papyrus<sup>2</sup>. The sign may be therefore tentatively read here as an Elamitic determinative for plant or wood comparable to *išu* in Babylonian.

b) The second part of the compound (see for Elamitic forms *Liste* 71—2, and for Babylonian, *Rec.* 19) has been already identified with *𐎶* *NU* = *balu*, to destroy (Br. 1961).

It is clear from the archaic form that this character and not *𐎶* = *KUR*, *PAP* (see above) was the original of the present case sign though both have the meanings "hostility, destruction" in common and seem to have been to a certain degree interchangeable. For its use with a plant determinative compare *NU-U* (*išu*) some kind of instrument for cutting (Br. 1993) and *NU-* (*išu*) *SAR* (*amelu*) gardner (Br. 1992).

5. Again a compound, but as yet unidentified.


*Case B.* The case sign is *𐎶* *NA* = *abnu*, a stone, (Br. 1582).




1. Père Scheil has already identified the Elamitic sign (*Liste* 373—7) with the Babylonian *GAL-ZU* (*Rec.* 98 + 188). *ZU* = *hurašu*, gold (Br. 134) or *šarpu*, silver, (Br. 138), hence *GAL-ZU* would mean "a large nugget of gold or silver".

2. Two Elamitic signs (*Liste* 19, 20, 22) may compared and also the group *Liste* 722—734 which suggests weights

<sup>1</sup> Evans, *op. cit.*


<sup>2</sup> Erman, *Ägyptische Grammatik*, M. Nos. 41, 42, and Evans, *op. cit.* page 114.


with the amount or value marked thereon. The Cretan  (List 53, 54) also suggests a weight though not so regarded by Evans.<sup>1</sup> The Babylonian form is clearly that for NA = abnu, stone, (*Rec.* 13).

*Case C.* This is very difficult. The case sign may be read either  MA or a variant  of BA. If the former its archaic form was  which Prince describes as "a representation of land, earth",<sup>2</sup> and which is not unlike the character here found. If the latter, the primitive meaning would seem to have been "to cut, divide, apportion" and the pictograph some kind of an implement.




1. For possible Elamitic, see *Liste* 543—6 and for the Babylonian, *Rec.* 10, in which case it is the same as the case sign MA mentioned above.

2—4. Compare *Liste* 712 for the Elamitic; no similar forms in Babylonian.

*Case D.* The broken case sign permits only a conjectural reading, but , DU, meaning dahâdu, be plentiful (*Br.* 4474) is the best restoration.

1. With the Elamitic form (*Liste* 484) compare the Cretan  (*List* 98)<sup>3</sup> representing two palm branches. Evans has noted the resemblance to the archaic form of DU, be plentiful (see *Rec.* 64 and above)<sup>4</sup> and the palm as a symbol of prosperity and plenty was probably not confined to Babylonian.

*Case E.* The Elamitic form is *Liste* 339, not identified.

*Case F.* The case sign is broken, but is probably . The sign is here used with its double signification of kalbu, on the one hand and of amelu (*Br.* 11256), bultu (*Br.* 11258) and baltu (*Br.* 11257) on the other, the two latter being used instead of the more ordinary UŠ, , URU  although the underlying idea of the case is clearly that of the organs of generation.

1. For the Elamitic and Babylonian see *Liste*, 201—3, and

<sup>1</sup> Evans, *op. cit.* p. 202.

<sup>2</sup> Materials for a Sumerian Lexicon p. 228.

<sup>3</sup> Evans, *op. cit.*

<sup>4</sup> Evans, *op. cit.* p. 98.


*Rec.* 26. The latter equals UŠ = ridû, (Br. 5401), GIŠ = riḫû, (Br. 5042) and NITAḪ = zikaru (Br. 5048).

2. The Elamitic form (*Liste* 195) corresponds to the Babylonian sign (*Rec.* 403) GA = alâdu, to bear (Br. 5415).

3. The Babylonian is listed in *Rec.* as No. 438. LIK = Kalbu, dog.

*Case G.* The case sign is obliterated, but the contents of the case are clearly related to those of the preceding one in much the same way that Babylonian MAḪ and NITA are related to UŠ.


1. Compare for Elamitic *Liste* 197 and for the Babylonian *Rec.* 27. The latter equals NITA, zikaru, male (Br. 957) and URU, ardu, slave (Br. 956).

2. Compare for Elamitic *Liste* 196 and for the Babylonian *Rec.* 20, , GAN, an irrigated field. Père Scheil has already identified this Elamitic sign with the Babylonian GAN<sup>1</sup>, but its presence here in this group is difficult to understand except by an association of ideas peculiarly Semitic. This interpretation is strengthened by the fact that one of its three sign names is GA-GUNU, viz. the gunu of the GA which here appears as No. 2 of Case F and which means alâdu, to bear. Considering the late date of the tablet as indicated by the character of the case signs such a gunu-hypothesis is wholly tenable.


3. Seemingly a variant of No. 2.

*Case H.* Case sign lost and the signs late.

*Case I.* No case sign, though strangely enough in the usual place for it the tablet is unbroken. No identifications.

*Case J.* Case sign is , inu, eye.


1, 2, 3. All variants of the same sign for which see for the Elamitic *Liste* 612, and for the Babylonian *Rec.* 238. It represents the side view of the eye ball with the "eye-string".

*Case K.* Case sign is  = SIG. Its primitive meaning seems to have been "fresh, bright, pale, yellow or green". Later it has also a numerical value.


1. No. Elamitic equivalent. The Babylonian form is *Rec.* 101, SIG, arḫu, pale, yellow. Barton also gives to it the numerical value 216,000.<sup>2</sup>

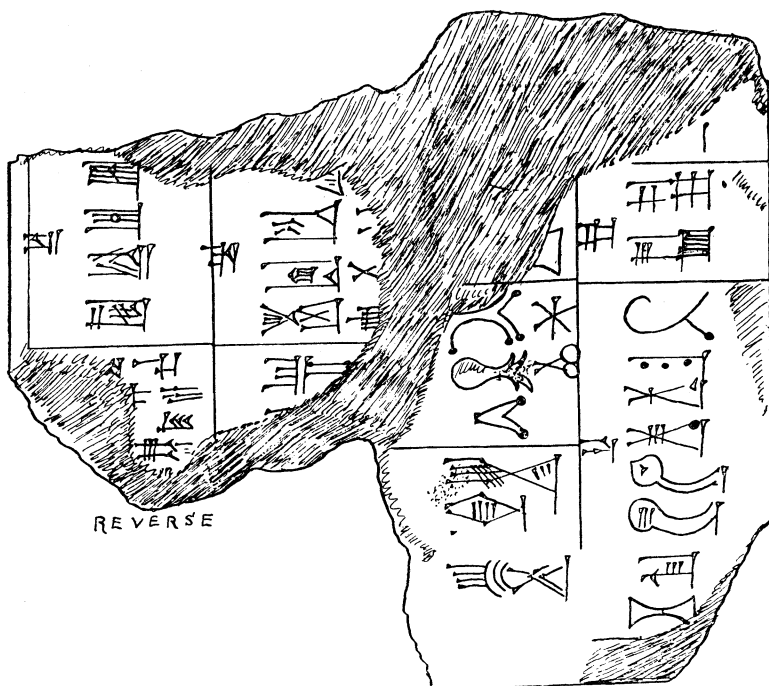
<sup>1</sup> *Délegation en Perse, Liste*, Nos. 372, 384.

<sup>2</sup> *Origin of Babylonian Writing*, No. 308.

2. This is the Elamitic sign *Liste* 653 with numerals inserted. Barton has suggested that the original form was , viz.  $3600 \times 60 = 216,000$ <sup>1</sup> and this corresponds to *Rec.* 491 which also equals 216,000 or  $3600 \times 60$ .

3. Likewise a numeral.<sup>2</sup>

*Case L.* Case sign is  = ŠAR, totality, completeness, also the numerical value 3600 (*Br.* 8234).



1. The Elamitic form is given in *Liste* 653, with which compare also *Liste* 26, 27, 28, from which it will be seen that Père Scheil has already identified this sign with *Rec.* 206 (cf. also 476, 489) ŠAR = gitmalu, kiššatu, etc., and the numeral 3600 (*Br.* 8234).

2. For the Elamitic see *Liste* 700, (cf. also 637), and *Délegation en Perse*, vol X, Pl. 4, D.

<sup>1</sup> See *The Haverford Library Collection*, Pt. II, pp. 16, 17.

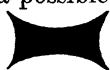
<sup>2</sup> See *The Haverford Library Collection*, *loc. cit.* and Hilprecht, B. E. XX, p. 26.





The Babylonian form is *Rec.* 490, to which Thureau-Dangin gives the numerical value 36,000.



On the reverso cases M-Q show late characters.

*Case R.* The case sign is broken away, but the general meaning of the signs contained in the case is "brightness, light".

1. The Elamitic form is given in *Liste* 832. A similar Babylonian sign (*Rec.* 549) remains unidentified, but a possible meaning for all three signs is suggested by than Cretan  (*List* 56)<sup>1</sup> which Evans interprets as an ingot of gold or bronze.


2. Compare for the Elamitic *Liste* 361—3, tentatively identified by Père Scheil with , išatu, fire, the archaic form of which is given in *Rec.* 82, suppl. 79, and which represents a burning torch.

3. Here the Elamitic is very close (see *Liste* 29) and has been identified with , AZAG (*Rec.* 252) silver.

4. The Elamitic form (*Liste* 97—8) has been already identified with , AN (*Rec.* 5). Compare the Cretan star or sun symbol  (*List* 107 d).

5. No similar sign and no clue as to interpretation. The sign itself suggests a pair of polished metal mirrors.

*Case S. and T.* have only late characters.

*Case X.* Case sign is  as follows, GIN, to go; TUM, to cause to go; GUB, to stand, to set up; Du and RA with somewhat undetermined force. The signs in this case clearly convey the idea of motion but with two exceptions remain unidentified.

1, 2, 5, 6, all unidentified.

3. Compare the Elamitic forms *Liste* 533—5. Also the Babylonian TUM (*Rec.* 310) meaning to approach violently.

4. No similar form known in Elamitic but Babylonian TUM (*Rec.* 311) means kablu, loins(?) (Br. 4958) and bears the same relation to the previous Babylonian that the Elamitic does to the previous Elamitic sign.



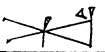



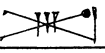
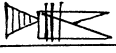



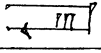
Conclusions may be drawn as follows. First, that the cases are arranged after a definite plan according to which the general underlying meaning is given by the case sign. The

<sup>1</sup> Evans' *Scripta Minora*.

remaining signs in each case are therefore more or less closely related to each other and either interpret or are interpreted by the case sign, after the manner of syllabaries. Secondly, there remains the subtle and yet irrefutable fact that the genre of the characters is *not* Babylonian. The broad general resemblance is very close, yet careful study will show that in the smaller though equally important details these signs correspond more consistently to the Elamitic as far as it goes than to the Babylonian. From these facts it is reasonable to conclude that the tablet is a fragment of an Elamitic-Babylonian syllabary.

	Tablet	Elamitic	Babylonian		Babylonian Ideographic value
Case A 1					ŠU
2					KUR, PAP.
3					NU = salmu (ALAM)
4					
5					NU
6					
7					
Case B 1					GAL-ZU
2					NA
Case C 1					MA (see J. A. O. S. XXIV, p. 389)
2					
3					
4					
5					
Case D					DU
Case E					

	Tablet	Elamitic	Babylonian		Babylonian Ideographic value
Case F I					US GIS NITAH
2					GA
3					LIK
Case G I					NITA URU
2					GAN
3		"	"	"	
Case J I					IGI
2		"	"	"	
3		"	"	"	
Case K I					SIG
2		*			* plus six tens inserted
3					
Case L I					ŠAR
2					
Reverse Case R I					
2					NÊ, NI
3					AZAG
4					AN
5					

	Tablet	Elamitic Babylonian			Babylonian Ideographic value
Case X I					
2					
3					TUM
4					TUM
5					
6					
7					
8	